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The Arbitration Treaties Once More.

The arbitration treaties, signed by Secretary Knox and Ambassador Bryce on the 3d of August, but not acted on by the Senate before the adjournment of Congress, have continued to be widely discussed throughout the nation.

So far as can be gathered from the hundreds of newspaper clippings coming to our office, the general sentiment of the people is strongly with the President, and the demand urgent that the treaties be ratified as early and with as little change as possible. The Senate has been the object of much criticism, some of it well reasoned and just, but some of it also, we must confess, indiscriminating and foolishly emotional.

The general verdict of the country, so far as it can be gathered at the present writing, seems to be as above indicated. The people are not a little impatient to have the possibility of war between this country and others made as remote as possible, and they feel that the prompt ratification of these treaties will

do much in this direction. They cannot understand why fine technicalities about constitutional rights and prerogatives should be allowed to stand in the way of a step of progress so momentous as that which the President and the public at large wish to see taken in this matter.

The criticisms of the treaties have been sharp and determined, from certain points of view. The Irish, societies and individuals, have from the start opposed the treaty with Great Britain, and continue to oppose it, on the theory that we should thereby be entering into an "entangling alliance" with the mother country; but how an agreement to arbitrate disputes instead of fighting over them can be called an "entangling alliance" passes comprehension. Such an agreement would put us in no way in the power of Great Britain. It would tie her hands as much as our own in the matter of the settlement of controversies. We are sorry that our Irish friends, who have done so much for the country in other ways, cannot lay aside their historic dislike of England, now that the reasons for it are disappearing, and help us in this great philanthropic undertaking. It would be to their everlasting credit to do so.

The German opposition to the treaty with Great Britain has been much exaggerated. The attempt of a few Germans in Boston and elsewhere to stir up opposition, on the ground that the treaty would ally us with Great Britain against Germany, was so pitifully senseless that it did not deceive many well-informed Germans. The officials of the National American-German Alliance, which has a membership of nearly two millions, are solidly with President Taft, and we are assured that their position is supported by the rank and file of the members and by prominent individual Germans all over the land. The fact that the German government has indicated to Washington its willingness to enter into negotiations for a similar treaty ought not to leave a single sensible German opposed to the ratification of the Anglo-American treaty.

Ex-President Roosevelt has held the treaties up to scorn on the ground that they are not "straightforward," but dishonest and "hopelessly confused as to what justiciable means"; that they promise, in regard to questions of vital interest and national honor, what nobody expects will be performed; that the provision for commissions of inquiry is worse than "silly," as it makes it possible for the commission to be composed wholly of foreigners, etc. This criticism of Mr. Roosevelt, which simply means that we must remain in the savage state—that we must not have too much arbitration, that we must reserve the right to fight and kill in any case where, ourselves being the judges, we think our rights or our interests have been

invaded—has been completely and nobly answered by President Taft and others, and has met with almost no public sympathy except from those who for other reasons oppose the ratification of the treaties, and the people are not likely to be persuaded by Mr. Roosevelt's vehement rhetoric to believe that President Taft, Secretary Knox, and their advisers, in their effort to extend the reign of law and lift civilization to a higher plane, have merely been "fooling" or enacting a mad-house drama. The people mean to be delivered from the horrors, the cruel injustices, and the consuming waste of war, and they will follow the man who leads them as far as possible away from the brutal paths of savagery. They know instinctively that "righteousness" lies along this path, and not where bullets and bayonets and rapid-fire guns deal out death and destruction.

Technically speaking, the treaties are possibly justly open to the criticism of Ex-Secretary of State Olney and a few others, that the provision for commissions of inquiry, in cases where questions may not be considered justiciable, really renders them limited, and that, therefore, they show little advance on the treaties negotiated by Secretary Root three years ago. This provision certainly would make it possible for either government to declare any serious question whatever unarbitrable, if it were disposed to do so. We confess that we should have been better pleased if the whole section on commissions of inquiry had been omitted and the two governments had pledged themselves without reservation to refer to the Hague Court all disputes that might hereafter arise between them. But the treaties seem to us to mark a much longer step in advance than this criticism allows. They do not reserve from arbitration any kind of controversy, as all former treaties have done. They contemplate regular reference to arbitration of controversies of every kind. That is a great gain. In the commissions of inquiry they have merely provided for the very remote contingency where one of the signatory governments might find some question confronting it so deeply and intimately affecting its national life as to make it unwilling, without unusually thorough study of the situation, to consent to its reference to the court of arbitration. If such a contingency was to be provided for at all, we do not see how it could have been better done than in the way which the treaties prescribe. Both parties are given an equal voice in the decision of the commission, and the fear that either of them would ever be overridden or led by bribe or otherwise to betray its country is, in the case of these highly civilized nations, so remote a possibility as to deserve to be dismissed as utterly frivolous. Mr. Roosevelt's fear that the commission of inquiry might be composed wholly of foreigners, and thus the nation's interest sacrificed, is a very curious objection. If our own country chose to put foreigners on the commission, it would only be on condition that the other party to the treaty named foreigners also, and we should thus have a body of entirely disinterested commissioners who would be even more able to decide whether the controversy were arbitrable under the present principles of international law than any mixed commission of nationals of the two countries could ever do.

The ex-President's argument, if it is worth anything, is really directly against his own position.

The objection of Senators, that their prerogatives and duties as part of the treaty-making power would be sacrificed by the treaty in its unamended form, was considered in our last issue, and has been ably and exhaustively answered by President Taft, notably in his address at Hartford on September 7. The President has since confessed his willingness to see put into the treaty a provision that the members of the commission of inquiry be appointed "with the advice and consent of the Senate," as we had supposed would be done, of course. We hope that in this way a method has been found by which the Senate and the President may come to an agreement, and that soon after Congress meets in December we may see the treaties ratified and proclaimed to the world.

Postponement of the Peace Congress.

A cablegram was received at the office of the American Peace Society on September 13th from the Peace Bureau at Berne, saying that the Peace Congress, which was to have opened at Rome on the 25th ult., had been postponed. This news was not unexpected, for the various reports received at the health department in Washington had indicated that the cholera conditions in Italy were much worse than the Italian authorities had been willing openly to admit. The local Committee at Rome, who had put so much hard work into the preparations for the Congress, hesitated to the very last to consent to postponement, and only yielded when the knowledge of the widespread prevalence of the cholera epidemic became so general as to threaten to wreck the Congress if the attempt were made to hold it.

It is unfortunate, from one point of view, that the postponement was not agreed upon earlier. Most of the American delegates were either in Europe or already on the way, and will be greatly disappointed—some of them, at any rate—at the situation in which they find themselves. The same will be true also of the delegates to the Interparliamentary Conference which was to have followed the Peace Congress and which has been postponed for the same reason. But the local Committee have probably done the best they could under the difficult circumstances. The Congress promised to be one of the largest and most important ever held. The number of those enrolling themselves in advance as members was exceptionally large, and the committee, having spent so much time and money in elaborate preparations, were extremely loath to give the meeting up. Count Gubernatis, chairman of the committee, and his associates in Rome have our warmest sympathies in the trying circumstances in which they have found themselves, and we do not feel inclined in the least to censure them.